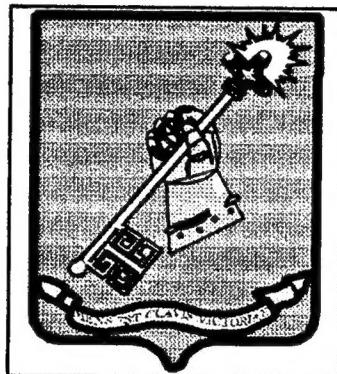


COHESIVE TACTICAL UNITS ARE EFFECTIVE UNITS

A Monograph

by

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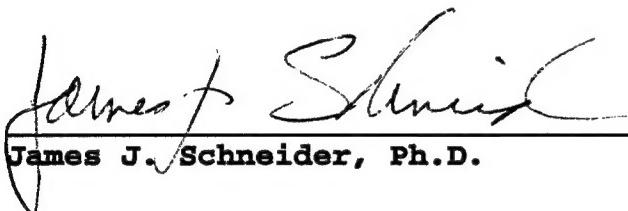
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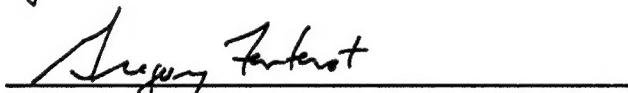
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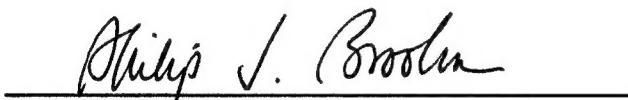
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ABSTRACT
Cohesive Tactical Units are Effective Combat Units

This monograph discusses the importance of cohesion to build an effective tactical unit. Historically, armies that have done well in combat have been cohesive units. This monograph investigates the components that produce effective cohesive units among those that served in combat over a protracted period (six months or more).

The monograph examines two U.S. tactical units. The first unit studied will be the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry from the 1st Cavalry Division in 1965. The second unit studied will be Task Force Barker from the 23rd Americal Division in 1968. The primary focus of this study is to examine the following question: To what extent was cohesion a factor in the success of 1/7th Cavalry and in the failure of Task Force Barker? This monograph will compare the two units using criteria derived from Anthony Kellet's Combat Motivation.

Finally, the significance of this study emerges from the likelihood that in the future, the U.S. Army will conduct a variety of protracted operations under the heading of operations other than war (OOTW). The success of these operations will depend on the Army's ability to field cohesive tactical units.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

COHESIVE TACTICAL UNITS ARE EFFECTIVE COMBAT UNITS

Historically, armies that have done well in combat have been cohesive units. The Germans on the Eastern front during WW II fought tenaciously against the Russians though they were outnumbered, out-gunned, and out supplied. In the American Civil war, the Army of Northern Virginia fought exceptionally well against large Northern Armies and often defeated them. In these and many other examples success lay in unit cohesion. According to Richard Gabriel, "Unit cohesion is the presence of a set of conditions which create the expectation that a military unit will attempt to perform its assigned orders and mission irrespective of the situation and attendant risks."¹ Ardant du Picq, who was a French nineteenth century cavalry officer and military theorist, wrote that cohesion is "the ultimate confidence, firm and conscious, which does not forget itself in the heat of action and which alone makes true combatants."² In combat, cohesion becomes a decisive and powerful force.

Cohesion denotes the feelings of belonging and solidarity that occur mostly at the primary group level and result from sustained social interaction, both formal and informal; these interactions are shared among group members on the basis of common experiences, interdependence, and shared goals and values.³ During combat situations, cohesion is a key element for an effective combat unit.

The purpose of this monograph is to investigate the components that produced effective tactical cohesive units among those that served in combat

over a protracted period of time (six months or more). This study will investigate two U.S. tactical units. The first unit studied will be the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, from the 1st Cavalry Division in 1965. The second unit studied will be Task Force Barker from the 23rd Americal Division in 1968. The primary focus of this study is to examine the following question: To what extent was cohesion a factor in the success of 1/7th Cavalry and in the failure of Task Force Barker? This study will compare the two units using criteria derived from Anthony Kellet's Combat Motivation. The four components of cohesion addressed are the primary group, leadership, discipline, and esprit. These four components are especially critical for a unit to sustain cohesion in combat.

The significance of this study emerges from the likelihood that in the future, the U.S. Army will conduct a variety of protracted operations under the heading of operations other than war(OOTW). The success of these operations will ultimately depend on the Army's ability to field cohesive tactical units.

1. THE PRIMARY GROUP

Kellet defines the primary group as "a fundamental social relationship."⁴

Soldiers share common experiences, such as basic training, advanced training, and other moral and social associations. Though the backgrounds of the soldiers may differ when they first start their training together, slowly they develop a common goal and shared identity with the Army. The common tactical situations that infantry units train under shape them as a primary group.⁵ Perhaps more than any other service infantry units, for example, rely heavily on group cohesion. Because of the nature of the investigation much of the following discussion will be in terms of infantry units.

Important factors used to define the primary group include a) compatibility, b) turbulence, c) competition , d) size, and e) anxiety. Next is a brief discussion of the factors of the primary group and how they relate to cohesion.

a) COMPATIBILITY

Compatibility is "the capability of existing or operating together in harmony."⁶ It is one factor contributing to the strength of the primary group. The infantry soldier must be able to fight along with his fellow soldier. According to S.L.A. Marshall, "I hold it to be one of the simplest truths of war that the thing which enables an infantry soldier to keep going with his weapons is the near presence or the presumed presence of a comrade. The warmth which derives from human companionship is as essential to his employment of the arms with which he fights as is the finger with which he pulls a trigger or the eye with which he aligns his sights."⁷

b) TURBULENCE

A concern related to primary group cohesion is personnel turbulence.

Kellet wrote, "a number of studies, both of morale and of particular campaigns, have noted a relationship between long service within a certain unit and high morale."⁸ The longer soldiers are in the same unit, the better these units will do in combat. Units that have low personnel turbulence become very familiar with their standard operating procedures within their units. They can act on orders from their leaders without having very specific guidance. As William Henderson wrote, "Cohesion is promoted the longer the soldier anticipates remaining in his unit. The greater the frequency of association in pursuit of common purposes, the greater the cohesion."⁹

c) COMPETITION

Competition between groups that are different can intensify the primary group identification.¹⁰ Marshall noted, "Participation in sport may help turn a mild bookkeeper into a warrior if it has conditioned his mind so that he relishes the contest. The act of teaching one man to participate with other men in any training endeavor is frequently the first step in the development of new traits of receptiveness and outward giving in his character."¹¹ Healthy competition between squads and platoons is helpful when trying to build cohesion. The soldiers through competition within their units, develop pride in their unit and a will to win for their group. This will to win instilled in the group becomes crucial when fighting an enemy force in combat.

Competition can also become a negative force within the group. Leadership has to define the goals of competition and put them into perspective for the group. For instance if 1st squad can never beat 2nd squad in any unit

competitions, 1st squad could eventually develop a resentment against the 2nd squad. Resentments between combat units in tactical environment could be dangerous. Therefore the leadership of the unit has to focus soldiers to understand that the success of the entire group is more important than the success of only a portion.

d) SIZE

With respect to unit size Kellet wrote, "The company was the smallest group which an infantryman would identify. This seems still to have been true during the First World War, but by the Second World War the basic group in an infantry regiment had become the section or squad. The company, however, retained its importance."¹² Today an infantryman's world revolves around the squad.

The basic unit the infantrymen will fight in is the squad, although infantrymen identify with the company because of the relative administrative, tactical, and disciplinary self-containment.¹³ However, the true strength of the company comes from the squad. Marshall noted, "Squad unity comes to full cooperation between each man and his neighbor. There is no battle strength within the company or regiment except as it derives from this basic element within the smallest component."¹⁴ The cohesion that men in a squad build is important because it binds together its soldiers who will be closest to the knife's edge in combat.

e) ANXIETY

A soldier reduces anxiety by being a part of a cohesive group. Marshall wrote, "On the field of fire it is the touch of human nature which gives men courage and enables them to make proper use of their weapons."¹⁵ In combat the greatest anxiety for the cohesive group is disgrace in the eyes of fellow soldiers. Cohesion replaces a counterproductive anxiety (dying) with an anxiety conducive to fighting (honor).¹⁶ The presence of his fellow squad members reduces anxiety with him in the midst of the danger to fight off the potential danger of combat.

The primary group criterion, and the factors that make up the primary group are the components that make up the methodology for measuring cohesion for this study. The next component studied is leadership.

2. LEADERSHIP

Leadership is "the art of direct and indirect influence and the skill of creating the conditions for sustained organizational success to achieve the desired result."¹⁷ The key to successful units is how well their leadership creates unit cohesion. Kellet wrote, "Well trained and experienced officers and senior noncommissioned officers confer a sense of protection on their subordinates by virtue of their military skills; wasteful leadership and high casualties erode the subordinates' sense of well-being. Thus, effective combat leadership has to temper accomplishment of the unit's mission with concern for the integrity and well-being of the group."¹⁸ Leadership plays a key role in shaping effective cohesion in the successful unit.

3. DISCIPLINE

S.L.A. Marshall pointed out, "In the majority of men the retention of self-discipline under the conditions of the battlefield depends upon the maintaining of an appearance of discipline within the unit." ¹⁹ Along with leadership, discipline is perhaps the most important factor maintaining cohesion in a unit. Discipline reduces the uncertainty in combat situations and helps to build the confidence of soldiers as they fight. Evidence that a unit without discipline is a poor unit was reaffirmed in an Army lesson learned from 1968, "Deterioration of military standards denotes a decline, and no combat unit has ever been a good fighting unit without good discipline. The popular image of a rugged fighter, dirty, unwashed, unshaven and caked with grime is, in reality, indicative of a soldier who has not been supervised and clearly reveals a collapse of leadership and discipline."²⁰

A lack of discipline destroys what good cohesion a unit might build because no one is maintaining the most important weapon in an infantry company, the soldier. Units with the good discipline will clearly stand out as the better cohesive, more successful unit. A unit with good leadership and strict discipline will more than likely be a confident unit. S.L.A. Marshall noted, "In so far as his ability to mold the character of troops is concerned, the qualifying test of an officer is judgement placed upon his soldierly abilities by those who serve under him. If they do not deem him fit for command, he cannot train them to obey. Thus when slackness is tolerated in officership, it is a direct invitation to disobedience, and as disobedience multiplies, all discipline disappears".²¹ This confidence the unit has will build strong unit esprit.

4. ESPRIT

Esprit is the spirit of the unit. Kellet states, "Esprit denotes feelings of pride, unity of purpose, and adherence to an ideal represented by the unit, and it generally applies to larger units with more formal boundaries than those of the primary group."²² Primarily, esprit is a tie to unit pride which links the primary group to the army.²³ Three factors that are important for the study of unit esprit are a) tradition, b) competition, and c) territoriality.

a) TRADITION

Kellet wrote that "Proponents of the regimental system have often argued that a fully articulated regimental ethos, one usually associated with colors, battle honors, distinctive dress, traditions, history, regimental days, geographical association, and competitive prowess provides an enduring and almost unique focus of loyalty."²⁴ Many units in the U.S. Army that have great traditions are usually the combat units. Traditional cavalry, infantry, and artillery units in the U.S. Army such as the 2nd U.S. Cavalry, the 1st Infantry Division "The Big Red One," or Hamilton's 5th artillery are units that have great unit traditions in the U.S. Army. U.S. units with great traditions promote unit esprit. Their traditions are legacies of victories in great battles in wars past, which gives soldiers a sense of pride in their unit. The pride soldiers gain from being associated with these units is an important part of building unit esprit.

b) COMPETITION

Competition between units builds esprit. When units compete against each other in games, the soldiers want to win the game to prove that their unit is the best. In U.S. Army armor units, their ultimate competition comes during tank

gunnery. Companies establish themselves as "top guns" if they can fire the highest in their battalion. This type of healthy competition makes the whole battalion better because all the companies practice hard at being the "top gun." There can be only one winner, but everyone competes very hard to attain the reputation as the "top gun." This competition improves the general gunnery proficiency of the battalion. Also, this competition between the companies improves the total unit esprit.

c) TERRITORIALITY

Kellet wrote that, "Territoriality is the linking of units to specific localities, primarily for recruiting purposes." He goes on, "Although the U.S. Army has set less importance on regimental tradition than have the British, the Americans are well aware of the value of unit pride."²⁵ Although the U.S. Army does not recruit soldiers from any specific area of the country for a particular unit, U.S. soldiers still maintain a sense of territoriality when going to certain units. For example, a soldier going to the 11th Armored Cavalry regiment in the 80's knew he would work the Fulda gap. This was a special mission for those soldiers because it gave them the sense of being on the forward edge for the fight against communism. Working difficult missions such as border patrol gave cavalry units great unit esprit.

In chapter 2, this study will review 1/7th CAV and TF Barker's unit performance in combat operations. The case studies will provide an insight into the deployment, and combat operations of the two units. From a review of their performances we can evaluate how the successful unit, 1/7th CAV maintained good cohesion under stressful situations and how TF Barker did not.

CHAPTER 2 THE CASE STUDY

I. 1/7th CAVALRY

SETTING THE STAGE FOR CONFLICT

William Henderson stated, "The nature of modern war indicates that small unit cohesion is the only force capable of causing soldiers to expose themselves consistently to enemy fire in pursuit of the Army's goals."²⁶ Cohesion is important in tactical units because it is the moral force that holds the soldiers together when they are under fire from the enemy.²⁷

In 1965 America decided to intervene directly into the affairs of South Vietnam. This was the first year of heavy troop deployments to Vietnam to stop the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. In 1965, the war was not yet unpopular as it would become later. The soldiers that went over in the early deployments were sure that they were doing the right thing for their country.²⁸

The 1/7th Cavalry arrived in Vietnam in September 1965. Before their arrival, they were designated as the Army's first airmobile division.²⁹ General Hamilton Howze was one of the main individuals that promoted the Airmobile concept in the army. One of his most enthusiastic subordinates during the experimentation with the airmobile idea was General Harry Kinnard. For General Kinnard's hard work with the experimental airmobile concept, he was made the commander of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile).³⁰

TRAIN-UP AND DEPLOYMENT OF THE 1/7TH

The 1/7th Cavalry was an airmobile battalion assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division. Building cohesion in a new unit such as the 1/7th would be a great challenge. When the unit formed at Fort Benning, Georgia, the division sent some of the best NCO's on post to make up the enlisted leadership.³¹ Many

soldiers, however, came from a variety of units from all over the installation and from other posts. Most of the training of this period was still preparing to fight a European enemy.³² The challenge for the commander of the battalion was to train new soldiers on a new doctrine and to prepare them to fight a non-doctrinal enemy. To do this task the battalion would need an experienced, tough commander. The right man for the job was LTC Hal Moore.

LTC Moore was an outstanding leader. When he took command of 1/7th, he was forty-two years old with nineteen years of commissioned service, including a fourteen-month combat tour in Korea. Upon taking command his standards for his commanders and staff were straight forward: "Only first-place trophies will be displayed, accepted, or presented in this battalion. Second place in our line of work is defeat of the unit on the battlefield, and death for the individual in combat. No fat troops or officers. Decision-making will be decentralized: Push the power down. It pays off in wartime. Loyalty flows down as well. I check everything."³³ This straight forward, no nonsense approach to leadership was important for the success of his battalion in combat.

Good battalions not only have good officers but it is especially important to have outstanding noncommissioned officers. 1/7th CAV had an outstanding cadre of NCOs headed by CSM Basil Plumley. He was a combat veteran from WW II and the Korean War. He instilled quiet confidence in the soldiers of the battalion and motivated the new NCOs in the battalion to do at their best.³⁴

Many combat veterans of the Korean War and former ARVN advisors made up the battalion's leadership. These combat veterans provided an unusually strong core of leadership. Enlistees and draftees made up the soldiers of the battalion. These soldiers were hard workers and adjusted well to the

Army. They also responded remarkably well to the strong unit leadership.³⁵ Many soldiers in the battalion enlisted for a two-year service obligation. This began to cause some concern to LTC Moore who expressed his disgust at having to part with essential trained soldiers before deploying and while in Vietnam. This policy was obviously faulty and it threatened to create turbulence in the unit and thus undermine general cohesion.³⁶

COMBAT PREPARATION AND COMBAT OPERATIONS

The soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division arrived in Vietnam in September of 1965 and went to the division base camp at An Khe. The first big mission of the division was to clear jungle and make a base camp. After weeks of hard work, the soldiers cleaned out an area and groomed it to perfection. The soldiers and leaders affectionately referred to this location as the "Golf Course," because of the well-manicured appearance of the base camp.³⁷

The focus of the combat operations of the 1st Cavalry Division was in the Ia Drang Valley. The Ia Drang is a valley in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam. An old Vietnamese proverb from the days of the Indochina Wars said that "To control the Central Highlands means you could control Vietnam."³⁸ The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) understood the importance of the Central Highlands and constructed a strong defense of the area.

The first objective of the NVA was to gauge the American fighting ability. While there had been engagements between the Viet Cong units and ARVN units under U.S. Army advisors, no major battle against a battalion-sized element had yet taken place. COL Man, the commander of the NVA Division that included the 320th, 33d, and the 66th regiments that eventually fought

against the 1/7th in the Ia Drang said, "If you want to fight the tiger, then you have to draw him out of the cave." His division began drawing the tiger out of the cave by attacking a Special Forces base at Plei Me.³⁹ The 1st Cavalry Division was sent to assist the Special Forces against the attacking NVA. This engagement led to the start of the Ia Drang campaign.

The next mission for the 1/7th CAV came in November 1965. The 1st Cavalry Division had done well against the NVA in helping to rescue the Special Forces soldiers from their situation at Plei Me.⁴⁰ The commanding general of the division, MG Kinnard, decided to maintain contact with the NVA and destroy them. The 3rd Brigade under the command of COL Thomas W. Brown had the mission to gain and maintain contact with the enemy. COL Brown decided to send the 1/7th CAV on the mission, since he believed it to be his best trained battalion.⁴¹

Intelligence reported that the NVA was located near a place called Chu Pong massif, and 1/7th Cavalry was air lifted into landing zone (LZ) X-RAY on 14 November 1965 to gain and maintain contact with the enemy. Unbeknownst to LTC Moore there were three regiments of NVA regulars waiting to fight the cavalrymen. The strength of 1/7th CAV's unit cohesion would receive its first test under enemy fire at LZ X-RAY.

LTC Moore was on the first helicopter that landed under heavy fire on LZ X-RAY. Naturally the soldiers responded well to LTC Moore's fine example of courage and leadership. As the rest of the helicopters arrived at the LZ, they were also taken under fire.⁴² When LTC Moore exited the helicopter, he quickly took charge of the situation, giving orders and moving soldiers into position to prepare for combat. He had scarce intelligence regarding size and dispositions

of the enemy his battalion was about to face. Unknown to Moore was the fact that the enemy would outnumber him six to one.⁴³

The initial engagement proved particularly costly to the unit. A platoon from B company under LT Henry Toro Herrick was ambushed while pursuing an enemy force. However, the unit continued to fight despite losing its leaders and taking heavy casualties. LT Herrick's platoon cohesion had been built through sound disciplined training and effective small group leadership. LT Herrick's "lost platoon" would remain separated from the battalion for more than twenty-four hours, but during this time the platoon never stopped fighting, instilled with the hope that their comrades would relieve them.⁴⁴

Once LTC Moore found out what happened with the lost platoon, he immediately took steps to try to rescue them. He also realized that his whole battalion had become heavily engaged by a superior sized enemy. As difficult as that situation was, Moore directed the battalion battle and organized a rescue for the lost platoon. His great leadership inspired the soldiers of the 1/7th CAV to fight on against numerically superior odds and eventually win. His presence on the battlefield directing fires and communicating with the lost platoon were all examples of great combat leadership. Eventually the other half of 1/7th CAV was committed to LZ X-Ray and were put into position by LTC Moore. This provided for a tighter, larger perimeter in which to fight. Later during the night of 15 November, Moore sent a company to rescue the soldiers of the lost platoon.⁴⁵

LT Walter J. Marm was a platoon leader for Alpha company, 1st platoon. His platoon was pinned down by enemy machine gun fire and was not able to return fire effectively against an advancing unseen enemy. LT Marm decided

to use his own initiative to motivate his platoon to action. Marm rushed a machine gun emplacement and killed all the enemy soldiers manning the gun.⁴⁶ During his charge, Marm was shot in the face breaking his jaw. This act of bravery by a junior leader inspired the men of his platoon to band together and push the enemy out of their perimeter. Marm's courageous and inspired leadership enabled his platoon to fight on against overwhelming odds.⁴⁷

Acts of bravery at the enlisted level occurred often because a "buddy" did not want his friend captured or killed by the enemy. One example was SP4 Willard Parish, a battalion mortarman. SP4 Parish and his buddy PFC James Coleman worked the 81-mm mortar together. During a fire fight, Coleman was wounded and the NVA soldiers were closing in to finish him off. SP4 Parish using his M-60 machine gun and his wounded buddy's .45 caliber pistol fired magazine after magazine at the enemy. The next morning he found 100 dead bodies around his position. Coleman was successfully evacuated, his life saved through the love of his buddy. Parish's "sticking by" his buddy provides a clear and literal example of the meaning of cohesion: sticking together.

These heroic acts of bravery point out the overall strong cohesion in 1/7th CAV. The cohesion was a result of good leadership, outstanding discipline, and unit esprit among the companies. LTC Moore was the essence of great leadership on the battlefield. He was always visible on the battlefield. His tough training in the states helped make the 1/7th CAV a disciplined unit.⁴⁸ The strong discipline portrayed by the battalion is especially noteworthy. Under horrendous fire by three NVA regiments they stuck together and inflicted hundreds of casualties on the enemy. Although they suffered a great deal of losses themselves, there were never instances when the unit seemed ready to

quit. The whole battalion seemed to believe in one another's ability to fight hard in a tough situation.⁴⁹ This amazing toughness came from an organization that formed together as a unit less than a year before combat operations.⁵⁰

The 1/7th CAV displayed tremendous cohesion during combat operations. The leadership of the battalion and the discipline of the soldiers of the battalion proved to be the main ingredients for a successful cohesive mix within the battalion. In TF Barker, on the other hand, strong leadership and strict discipline were quite lacking in the unit. Eventually, at My Lai 4 this lack of cohesion would cause this unit to commit a horrible war crime.

II. TF BARKER, SETTING THE STAGE FOR CONFLICT

The TET offensive began January 31, 1968 as the NVA and Viet Cong attacked cities and towns throughout South Vietnam.⁵¹ TET hit the American military like a bolt of lightning. MACV had been expecting trouble but not on such a massive scale.⁵²

The Army's new 23d Infantry (Americical) Division, was assigned the mission to destroy enemy forces in the two southern provinces in the I Corp tactical zone. The Americical Division was forming and did not carry much offensive capability. Its most recent component was the poorly trained and equipped 11th Infantry Brigade (Light), which had just disembarked in Vietnam in December 1967. Already divisional soldiers were calling it "The Metrical Division sponsored by General Foods," hardly a phrase reflecting high morale and respect.⁵³

In the U.S. in 1968, racial and civil disturbances were increasing and the Department of Defense was faced with the possibility of an internal insurrection in the United States. Nineteen sixty-eight would prove to be a tough year for the U.S. Army all around.

TRAIN UP AND DEPLOYMENT OF TF BARKER

Task Force(TF) Barker was an infantry battalion and a tactical component of the Americical Division. LTC Frank Barker commanded the battalion. The study here will primarily focus on the actions of Charlie company of TF Barker. Charlie company was picked to go to Vietnam in 1968 to become a member of Task Force Barker because it was the 11th Brigade's best company.⁵⁴ In a short period of five months, Charlie company would go from

being the best company in the brigade to the worst. Part of the reason for the subsequent disintegration of Charlie company was their loss of unit cohesion.

Charlie company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry was a very typical infantry company. 87 percent of the NCOs in the company were high school graduates, which was 20 percent above the army norm for the time. Among the enlisted men, 70 percent had earned a high school diploma. Most of the men in the company were between 18 and 22 years old.⁵⁵ In the summer of 1967 a nucleus of officers and NCOs was drafted from other units for the demanding tasks of creating a new infantry unit. In December they were joined by CPT Medina.⁵⁶

CPT Ernest Medina was well known in the 11th Brigade as an aggressive no-nonsense commander. His enlisted soldiers had a great deal of respect for him because he once been an enlisted soldier. He worked his way through the ranks to become a seemingly good officer. Medina was a knowledgeable infantry officer, but he was also abrasive and sometimes sarcastic to his subordinates. If his junior leaders could not measure up to his strict standards as a leader, Medina would publicly embarrass them. His poor development of his subordinates would eventually contribute to the company's unraveling at My Lai.⁵⁷

William L. Calley was the 1st platoon leader for Charlie company. Calley was a twenty-four-year old college drop out from Florida. He enlisted in the army after working a few odd jobs. Despite his poor academic record, Calley attended Officer Candidate School. Seymour Hersh notes, "He graduated from Officers' Candidate School at Fort Benning without even learning how to read a map properly."⁵⁸ This shows the need the army had at the time to recruit as

many officers for combat duty as quickly as possible. Apparently the army was forced to take substandard officers to lead soldiers in combat.

Before leaving for Vietnam Charlie company excelled in all the training cycles before deploying to Vietnam. Although the company excelled in training as a group, LT Calley did not do well individually during the train-up for war. Calley respected Medina a great deal and wanted more than anything to impress him that he was as good a soldier as Medina seemed to be. But when Calley made mistakes, Medina humiliated him constantly in front of his soldiers. Medina would chew Calley out in front of formations, calling him "sweetheart" and belittling him at every opportunity. One of the soldiers of Charlie company, Gary Garfolo of Stockton, California felt Medina "didn't show any respect for Calley: it was kind of hard for anybody else to show respect."⁵⁹ Medina observed Calley's lack of confidence and lack of leadership skills and decided to humiliate Calley rather than train him.

The NCO leadership that trained the soldiers of Charlie company before deploying into Vietnam were aggressive, young noncommissioned officers. They wanted to train their soldiers to be tough and ruthless killers on the battlefield. The NCOs trained their soldiers not to trust anyone but their fellow soldiers. They taught their soldiers that all Vietnamese people were the enemy. The NCOs taught their soldiers that the Vietnamese were merely "slopes," or "gooks." This type training that taught disrespect for all the people of Vietnam would help contribute to the horrors that would eventually take place in My Lai.⁶⁰

Before deployment to Vietnam, Charlie company was considered a good company. The honor of being the lead company going to Vietnam for the 11th brigade made an important impression on the troops and contributed initially to

complete unit cohesion. Charlie company won the best company because they had excelled in several training and athletic events. Though Charlie company was impressive to the chain of command, some soldiers voiced concerns. Michael Bernhardt remarked that there seemed to be occasions when the company exhibited lax discipline. Other observers discounted this and attributed it to enthusiasm and esprit. Despite some concern about the unit's discipline, Charlie company was heading to Vietnam on 9 November 1967.⁶¹

COMBAT PREPARATION AND COMBAT OPERATIONS

Upon arrival in Vietnam, the 11th brigade set up Task Force Barker. One company from each of the three battalions in the brigade was assigned to the Task Force led by LTC Frank Barker. The Task Force set up operations at LZ DOTTIE in Quang Ngai Province east of Highway One to the South China Sea coast. The Task Force's main objective would be to keep pressure on the 48th Viet Cong battalion located at a location the soldiers called "Pinkville."⁶²

Many weeks after arriving in Vietnam the soldiers of Charlie company still had seen no action. In January 1968 the company conducted combat patrols. When they captured suspected enemy prisoners their aggressive commander, CPT Medina, and LT Calley would beat the prisoners to get information. Both leaders believed that most of the Vietnamese people in the area collaborated with the VC. They wanted their company to be the first to pinpoint the enemy forces in the area. This type of brutality carried over to the NCO leaders when they captured prisoners according to one task force member, Charles Hall. He said, "Squad leaders and platoon leaders did not enforce the rules, like for

beating people. This happened every day; everyday there was disregard for the people."⁶³

During combat patrols the company conducted in January-February 1968, several soldiers were killed or wounded. Minefields or booby traps caused the deaths of many of these soldiers. The men of LT Calley's platoon claimed that the soldiers of their platoon walked into these traps because of their platoon leader's stupidity. Apparently, his inability to read a map or compass caused Calley to lead his soldiers into some obvious enemy ambushes.⁶⁴

Many soldiers felt frustration by the loss of their comrades because they never saw the elusive enemy that was killing or wounding their fellow buddies.⁶⁵ One casualty in particular created tremendous grief among the men of Charlie company. SGT Cox, one of the most well-liked NCOs in the company, was severely mutilated and killed by a booby trap. This was one of many such incidents that had occurred over the month Charlie company was out patrolling. SGT Cox had become another victim of an unseen enemy. When he was evacuated from the battlefield, many soldiers were very angry that such a fine NCO died so horribly. They wanted revenge for their fallen comrade. At this point, the belief that all Vietnamese people were the enemy was reinforced in the minds of the soldiers. They believed that the villagers knew where the VC would plant their next booby trap but the people would not inform them. In the minds of the soldiers the entire village of My Lai was guilty of murder and would have to pay for its guilt.⁶⁶

Before arriving at the Hamlet of My Lai, many soldiers remembered CPT Medina's operations order that clearly stated "kill every living thing in the

village.⁶⁷ During the court martial that followed two years later, Medina denied issuing any such orders. He claimed he told the men to use "common sense" when engaging the enemy. The men of Charlie company clearly went beyond the bounds of "common sense" during the operation at My Lai.⁶⁸

When Charlie company arrived at My Lai, they killed everything in their path. They killed women, children, livestock, and burned the village to the ground. Medina, located with the trail platoon, did not have a good view of his soldiers' actions. He could not command and control his soldiers actions at the point of attack. Some soldiers, such as Varnardo Simpson, claim once they started killing people, "the training kicked in" and they could not stop.⁶⁹ Other atrocities such as rape occurred and there were claims that LT Brooks, the 2nd platoon leader, was a participant in the gang rapes with his platoon. None of the leaders of the company tried to stop these atrocities. Charlie company by this point had lost their leadership and discipline and had become a disorganized mob.⁷⁰

LT Calley, apparently awaiting his chance to redeem himself in the eyes of his commander and his men, continued the inhuman killing spree. Soldiers reported watching Calley machine gun lines of unarmed women and children. Calley forced many of his soldiers to join him in this execution style killing spree that slaughtered over one hundred civilians.⁷¹

The killing stopped because an Aviator, LT Hugh C. Thompson, flying over the village observed many Americans shooting, but no enemy was returning fire. He extracted some villagers from the massacre sight and he called in the incident to brigade headquarters. LTC Barker, the task force commander, flying over the hamlet also observed U. S. soldiers firing but did

not observe return fire. When he questioned Medina on this strange situation, Medina lied about facing an enemy force and the current body count. LTC Barker landed, received a report from Medina and told Medina to cease fire.⁷²

Finally, the slaughter in the village ended, and a cover up of the massacre began. Medina consolidated his platoon leaders and began asking for body counts and the number of weapons captured. He received large body count numbers, but no weapons captured. Medina immediately concluded that something terrible had happened. When Medina passed his body count numbers to TF HQ, LTC Barker noticed the same problem with high kills but no evidence to show there had been an enemy force in the village. Finally, as the brigade and battalion commanders realized the scope of the atrocity, they took no action, and instead treated the incident as a routine combat operation.⁷³

Most of the soldiers looked at the massacre as a part of war with the men following their seemingly routine orders. Others knew a great wrong had taken place and someone would have to suffer for the horrible slaughter that had occurred at My Lai. The soldiers who were not a part of the atrocity wanted to report the crime, but they did not trust anyone in the chain of command. Many innocent soldiers were threatened by the leadership of the company if they threatened to report the massacre.⁷⁴

Trust and confidence of the leadership throughout the company had by this time been entirely lost. The company soldiers openly smoked marijuana around their leaders and insubordination was rampant. By this time obviously the unit had suffered a complete moral collapse.⁷⁵ The question thus becomes, what caused such a complete unit collapse and why was 1/7th able to prevent

its own disintergration. Investigation and analysis of these particular issues will occur in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORICAL STUDIES

1/7th CAV

Primary Group

The primary group focus for the 1/7th CAV was the squad level. To evaluate the strengths or weakness of the primary group cohesion the focus of the analysis will begin by concentrating on the four factors that make up the primary group: a) compatibility, b) turbulence, c) competition, d) size, and e) anxiety.

COMPATIBILITY

Compatibility for 1/7th was built through tough home station training prior to deploying to Vietnam. The soldiers drilled and perfected their air mobile skills before deploying for combat. They performed this training under the critical eye of combat experienced cadre, who were aware of the importance of soldiers being well drilled before going into combat. The soldiers' intense training cycles before deployment made them aware of the strengths and weaknesses within their squads. Therefore, the soldiers and leaders knew whom they could depend on in certain situations to do critical missions. This strengthened the compatibility of the soldiers in the battalion prior to arrival in Vietnam.

In combat there were several instances when the soldiers were under heavy fire; yet they were confident that their comrades would know what action to take under fire. SP4 Parish's heroic effort to save PFC Coleman's life is but one example of several acts of heroism that took place at LZ X-RAY. These soldiers could do the impossible for each other because they knew their buddy

would do the same for them. This harmonious relationship provided the foundation for strong cohesion within the battalion.

TURBULENCE

President Johnson's refusal to declare a state of emergency during the war affected the stability of all units deployed to Vietnam.⁷⁶ Soldiers thoroughly trained in air mobile operations were not able to deploy with the battalion for combat. Soldiers that for months trained in critical positions were pulled out of these positions prior to deployment because their time in service had expired. Once in Vietnam, 1/7th CAV still experienced a strain on battalion manpower. At the end of September 1965, two months before the battle at X-RAY, the battalion's actual strength was 679 officers and men against an authorized strength of 767. Also, by November the battalion was due to lose an additional 132 men.⁷⁷ This loss of manpower affected the fighting strength of the battalion, but did not significantly reduce the morale of the soldiers.

COMPETITION

LTC Moore's view on competition in his battalion was that "only first-place trophies will be displayed, accepted, or presented in this battalion."⁷⁸ That set the tone for the view of competition in the battalion. You were either a winner or nothing at all. Second place meant nothing. His reason for this tough view of competition was for positive motivation for the soldiers. Although winning and losing in sports is different from combat, the will to win, to be number one, is a terrific motivator for a soldier in combat.

During combat operations friendly competition between platoons occurred. One example was when Moore was walking the perimeter before a fire fight and he asked soldiers from adjacent platoons about their situation.

They replied, "Sir, we'll still be here in the morning. Just make sure the 'hard corps' platoon [1st platoon Alpha 2/7th] doesn't cut and run."⁷⁹ The never-say-die attitude of the soldiers at LZ X-RAY that Moore promoted helped to develop cohesion in the squads.

SIZE

The predominant primary groups that fought together in combat at LZ X-RAY were squads and platoons. The "lost platoon" is a prime example of a small unit element that maintained its cohesion under tremendous fire during combat. At one point the platoon was attrited down to only seven soldiers. These seven soldiers maintained an effective defensive perimeter and held off hundreds of enemy soldiers for over 24 hours until rescued. The soldiers fought for their own lives and the lives of their buddies.⁸⁰

ANXIETY

The 1/7th CAV prepared to overcome fear and anxiety in a variety of ways prior to deploying to Vietnam. One example was a chain of command drill. During training exercises, a platoon leader would feign death, then the next ranking man in the chain of command would take charge of the platoon. This helped to reduce the uncertainty of "who is in charge" when the leader died in combat. This training method paid off when SGT Savage, a squad leader took over the lost platoon during their engagement. He was comfortable taking charge of the platoon because of the training received before deployment. His ability to call for indirect fires and direct automatic weapons fire help to save the platoon from certain death during their ordeal.⁸¹

LEADERSHIP

One of the chief contributors to unit cohesion 1/7th CAV leadership. Two elements in particular enabled the battalion to have strong leadership, and these were LTC Moore and the NCOs of the battalion. LTC Moore provided 1/7th CAV with tremendous, heroic leadership. As an experienced combat veteran, he knew what training requirements would be important to soldiers in combat. Moore required his company commanders to drill on basic infantry tactics. He knew a well-drilled soldier would perform favorably in combat. During battalion training, he held both leaders and soldiers to tough standards. He understood however that when they met the standard, they would survive in combat. Finally, on the battlefield he was always present, issuing orders, directing fires and giving instructions. He never lost his composure under fire and he always focused on the entire battalion fight, not just a small piece of the fight. He was a great combat commander, and his leadership strengthened the cohesion of the battalion.

Moore noted that "the real strength of my battalion was its sergeants, most of them combat veterans who had served in the battalion for three to five years."⁸² The NCOs of the battalion followed Moore's training philosophy to the letter. Moore's views on training for combat was the simple enforcement of tough standards. The NCOs not only trained the enlisted soldiers successfully meeting these standards, but they also developed their young platoon leaders simultaneously. Since the rotation of officers in the battalion was so great, Moore told his new lieutenants to "keep their mouths shut except to ask questions, and listen and remember everything the platoon sergeant tells

them."⁸³ Moore had absolute faith in the leadership abilities of his NCOs and during combat operations their performance was superb.

DISCIPLINE

The second great strength of 1/7th was their unit discipline. Self discipline, technical and tactical competence were the hallmark of good unit discipline in the 1/7th CAV. A small but important example of unit discipline revealed itself to reporter Joe Galloway. He wrote, "Over a first cigarette I watched Moore's men. First they shaved. Shaved? Up here? I was amazed." He further stated, " Moore looked me over and said: 'We all shave in my outfit reporters included.' My steaming coffee water went for a wash and a shave, and I gained a measure of respect for the man."⁸⁴ A small thing like shaving and cleaning weapons every morning seems like an insignificant act done by a soldier. But, a soldier taking care of his body and his weapon without being told by his leadership is a sure indicator of a good unit.

As S.L.A. Marshall commented, "Thus when slackness is tolerated in officership, it is a direct invitation to disobedience."⁸⁵ Soldiers disciplined enough to execute simple missions without constant supervision gives leadership confidence in their soldiers. With this confidence leaders can feel certain that their soldier can execute more important missions and succeed when called upon.

ESPRIT

The 1/7th CAV had superb unit esprit. Their esprit was built through outstanding leadership and firm discipline. When the 1/7th returned from the Ia Drang, reporter Dean Brelis witnessed it and recounted the following in his book: "By late afternoon they were all back at Pleiku. They walked off the big Chinooks and, without anyone giving a command, they straightened up. They were not dirty, tired infantrymen anymore. Hal Moore's battalion voluntarily dressed their lines, as if coming back to life. And the GI's who had not been in Ia Drang glanced at them with something approaching awe because these were the guys who had been in it. No cheers, but they could not conceal their admiration."⁸⁶ The esprit of 1/7th built in training and put to the test in combat strengthened the cohesion of the whole division.

TRADITION

The 1/7th CAV had a rich tradition that dated back to the historic 7th U.S. Cavalry. Hal Moore noted, "The words 'Garry Owen' made their way onto the regimental crest, and the officers and men of their regiment customarily accompanied each exchange of salutes with a hearty 'Garry Owen, sir! '"⁸⁷ The tradition of the 7th CAV uplifted the spirit of the leaders and men of the battalion even in combat situations. Moore noted how proud he was after the battle at X-RAY when checking the perimeter and the men saluted him with a resounding "Garry Owen, sir! "

TERRITORIALITY

The 1/7th fought in the Central Highlands during their campaign in the Ia Drang. The leaders and men knew that "to control the Central Highlands, you could control Vietnam." This was an important area of operations to the U.S.

effort in South Vietnam. Therefore, soldiers took pride in fighting the enemy to help take control this important terrain.

Cohesion in the 1/7th was built through strong leadership and strict discipline. LTC Moore was an outstanding combat leader. His leadership was a key ingredient building the exceptional cohesion in 1/7th CAV. His soldiers responded well to his leadership by performing their combat missions in a professional, disciplined manner. This was key to the unit success at LZ X-RAY. On the other hand cohesion crumbled in TF Barker because of weak leadership and lax discipline.

TF BARKER
PRIMARY GROUP

The primary group was squad and platoon level for TF Barker. The focus of their predeployment training and actions during combat occurred at these levels. The following is an evaluation of the effectiveness of the cohesion within Charlie company's primary groups.

COMPATIBILITY

The three companies from different battalions made up TF Barker. Charlie company's parent unit was 1/20th INF. The different companies of TF Barker never became a cohesive team and each company felt they were on their own. Therefore the soldiers and leaders in combat did not receive the same care and supervision they may have received from their parent organization. "To be honest, we felt abandoned by anyone above us," Michael Bernhardt observed much later.⁸⁸ They turned to themselves for companionship, recalls Bernhardt: "We had a company of men that all came from one country and were dropped 10,000 miles away and felt close, because there was no one else to feel close to." With the company seeing itself as its own self-contained island every soldier was important, and the loss of a soldier was a major loss to this tight family.

TURBULENCE

William Peers notes that "prior to deployment to Vietnam many of the men assigned to the 11th brigade had too little time remaining in service to be sent to South Vietnam; thus more than thirteen hundred replacements were brought in, many of them arriving on a few days before the unit was to leave

Hawaii. Even so, it was still short by over seven hundred men when it shipped out. Many of the men hardly knew each other, and there was a lack of cohesion in all units.⁸⁹ The same rotation policy that plagued the 1/7th CAV was to cause even greater problems for TF Barker.

Charlie company's most significant problems with turbulence were junior leaders. They received new platoon leaders just before deployment to Vietnam. The obvious lack of experience displayed by these key leaders would cause leadership problems for the company later during combat operations. Oddly enough CPT Medina was the commander for at least one year prior to company deployment to Vietnam.

COMPETITION

Charlie company had been the best company in the 11th brigade. As a result Charlie company won the honor of being the lead company to deploy. Upon arrival in Vietnam, Charlie company wanted to continue its reputation as the best company in the brigade. The measure of a good company in combat in Vietnam was taken to be the number of enemy soldiers killed and determined by body count.⁹⁰ Initially Charlie company was believed to have had a successful operation at My Lai. Reports of the engagement noted that Charlie company had defeated a major Viet Cong force at the village.⁹¹ Competition had become a negative motivator for Charlie company in this situation, because it drove the men to focus on a questionable measure of effectiveness, body count, as the criteria of success. Obviously, by this time the troops no longer distinguished between the villagers and the enemy.

SIZE

Many soldiers of Charlie company thought of the company as their surrogate family. Bilton notes, "The company had trained and lived together for nine months, ever since Hawaii. With every new day and night spent in the field, the feeling grew stronger that the men of Charlie company had no one else but each other." ⁹² Separated from their parent battalion, the soldiers of Charlie company bore loyalty only to their company, not the task force. The real issue was not so much the size of the TF Barker, but the fact LTC Barker never really fully integrated Charlie company into its organization.

ANXIETY

The initial casualties that Charlie company experienced from an invisible enemy increased the anxiety already present from the constant fear of death. It frustrated them that these backward, helpless people could kill the powerful American soldiers. What added to their frustration was the belief that the South Vietnamese people were aiding the Viet Cong. The people the Americans were sent to save did not seem willing to save themselves. This strange paradox caused severe anxiety for the soldiers of Charlie company.

LEADERSHIP

Profoundly poor leadership was a major contributor in the disintegration of Charlie company. CPT Medina set a poor leadership example by allowing many war crimes to go unpunished before and after My Lai. LT Calley committed crimes in his platoon and justified them as "the way things were in war." These two officers provided Charlie company with extremely poor examples of leadership in combat.

CPT Medina's poor leadership developing his junior leaders and his acts of brutality toward Vietnamese civilians set the tone for the behavior of the rest of the company and was manifested at My Lai. Even though he was an aggressive leader in the field, Medina had a lax attitude toward ensuring that his orders were carried out. Bilton notes that "Medina insisted that orders be obeyed, but in other respects he was one of the boys. Outsiders noticed that relations between officers and men were closer and more informal than in other companies."⁹³ Even before My Lai Medina had allowed rapes, murders, and brutalities to go unchecked. The soldiers felt any cruel behavior was acceptable and even encouraged by their commander.

William Calley was a poor officer. Calley's technical and tactical incompetence caused death in his platoon more than once. He received no respect from his soldiers and from his commander, CPT Medina. Calley sought to gain the respect of his men by butchering innocent people at My Lai. The company leadership provided absolutely no moral example for Calley or his men. The poor leadership by the officers of Charlie company contributed directly to their loss of unit discipline. This finally led to the destruction of cohesion in the company.

DISCIPLINE

Regarding discipline Bilton wrote that "Charlie company had already begun to mistreat civilians and prisoners long before[the My Lai massacre]. They were reacting to a booby trapped environment according to the prevailing attitudes of American and South Vietnamese troops before and after they arrived in Vietnam."⁹⁴ As mentioned earlier in **leadership** wanton acts of violence occurred and no leader would make corrections. Brutality toward

Vietnamese civilians became accepted practice by most soldiers in Charlie company. Never did the company leadership resort to punishment for any acts of brutality perpetrated against civilians. Discipline was therefore ineffective because serious punishment did not exist for serious offenses.

Once the atrocities began, Charlie company did other undisciplined acts. For instance, Fred Widmer, CPT Medina's radio operator openly smoked marijuana in front of Medina during My Lai. There is no mention that Medina stopped him. Medina was close to his soldiers, perhaps too close. As one participant pointed out, "Medina's failing, the failing of the whole company, was that we were too close together. You are not supposed to be."⁹⁵

UNIT ESPRIT

Charlie company had high unit esprit before its deployment to Vietnam. They were the best company in the 11th brigade and picked by the brigade commander to be the lead company for deployment to Vietnam. However, the men prepared to fight a conventional war instead of the actual war they found. Many leaders thought they would go into Vietnam and do very well in combat. Many soldiers also noted that Charlie company had "Unusually high esprit de corps."⁹⁶

After the company had been slowly attrited by the invisible enemy Charlie company's esprit faded. Bilton wrote that the "frustration and anger ate away at the company's esprit de corps. The men stopped believing that Charlie Cong was afraid of Charlie company."⁹⁷ One problem with unit esprit is that it develops within the context of conventional operations. Operations in Vietnam were hardly conventional. In the end Charlie company, like many other units in

Vietnam, suffered a sort of identity crisis because their identity had been based on past conventional warfare success.

TRADITION

Charlie company's tradition was as a part of Sykes' Regulars, the 1/20th infantry battalion. Their sobriquet was "Jungle Warriors."⁹⁸ As mentioned earlier, Charlie company as a part of TF Barker, was one of three companies from different battalions. Charlie company was never able to build on their unit pride brought from 1/20th INF within TF Barker. Each company in the task force was its own separate entity and as earlier LTC Barker never bothered instilling a particular unit pride within the task force.

TERRITORIALITY

The 150 square mile area TF Barker operated in was the embattled Quang Ngai Province located east of Highway One where it stretched to the South China Sea coast. Unlike the importance controlling of the Central Highlands, this area of operations did not appear to have quite as much significance. The soldiers called it "Indian Country" because of the heavy concentration of Viet Cong in the area. The nature of guerilla operations prevented Charlie company from ever getting a real sense that they "owned" the territory in which they operated. Consequently there was never any sense of personal commitment to this area in which they operated.

Leadership and discipline were key components of cohesion for 1/7th CAV. Without these components their success at LZ X-RAY could have easily been a failure. Consequently TF Barker's failure at My Lai occurred because of poor leadership and weak discipline. My conclusions will explore how leadership

and discipline will be important to cohesion in future operations. It seems that the most decisive elements of cohesion are leadership and discipline.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

FUTURE ENVIRONMENTS

Future U.S. Army operations will range from high intensity conflict to OOTW. Well trained, multitalented, cohesive soldiers will deploy to do a large array of missions. With all the uncertainty in the "new world order," cohesion, especially the components of leadership and discipline, will be important for the success of combat units in future operations.

In future operations such as OOTW, or combat situations, organizations will be force packaged for a prolonged period to conduct a specific mission. For instance, an armor company could deploy with a light infantry battalion to form a task force to do a certain mission. The challenge for leaders in this situation is to train within a brief period these units so they function as an effective and cohesive fighting force. In this example the armor company will probably be very uncomfortable operating with the light infantry battalion, but the battalion commander must establish a cohesive team to win in combat. In the future it is likely that many units will be thrown together as TF Barker was.

One lesson from TF Barker was LTC Barker's failure to make the task force into a cohesive team. Charlie company believed they were on their own surrounded by enemy at all times without support. The result of this lack of cohesion within this force-packaged unit was truly terrible. Conversely, 1/7th CAV went to combat as a unit that formed together five months prior to going into combat, with a new doctrine, and performed extremely well in combat. Leadership made the difference building cohesion in 1/7th CAV in a short time period which allowed them to perform well in combat.

Discipline in OOTW situations will be very difficult. In OOTW there will be a variety of missions and rules of engagement (ROE) that soldiers will perform. A soldier can go from combat operations to feeding homeless refugees in a short period of time. To do both missions equally well will require a very disciplined soldier, which understands his role in a rapidly changing environment. Also with ROE a soldier must understand when it is safe to fire and when not to fire. This mental flexibility comes from realistic training by tough caring leaders. Even if a soldier never trains to feed refugees or to aid flood victims, since they are well-disciplined soldiers, they can transition to different missions without difficulty.

Units need to train as force-packaged task forces. This can be simulated in a realistic training environment. Simultaneously leaders must develop a creative approach to leadership and discipline. It means that the primary group will no longer reside at its company, platoon and squad level. The burden the leaders will face then is to become familiar with troops throughout the brigade.

Cohesion is an important element for an effective unit in combat. As S.L.A. Marshall noted, "on the field of fire it is the touch of human nature which gives men courage and enables them to make proper use of their weapons."⁹⁹ If this is true, then it is important for units in combat to be cohesive units. This cohesion built in large part by strong leadership and good discipline. Cohesion maintains the strength of the most important weapon on the battlefield, the individual soldier.

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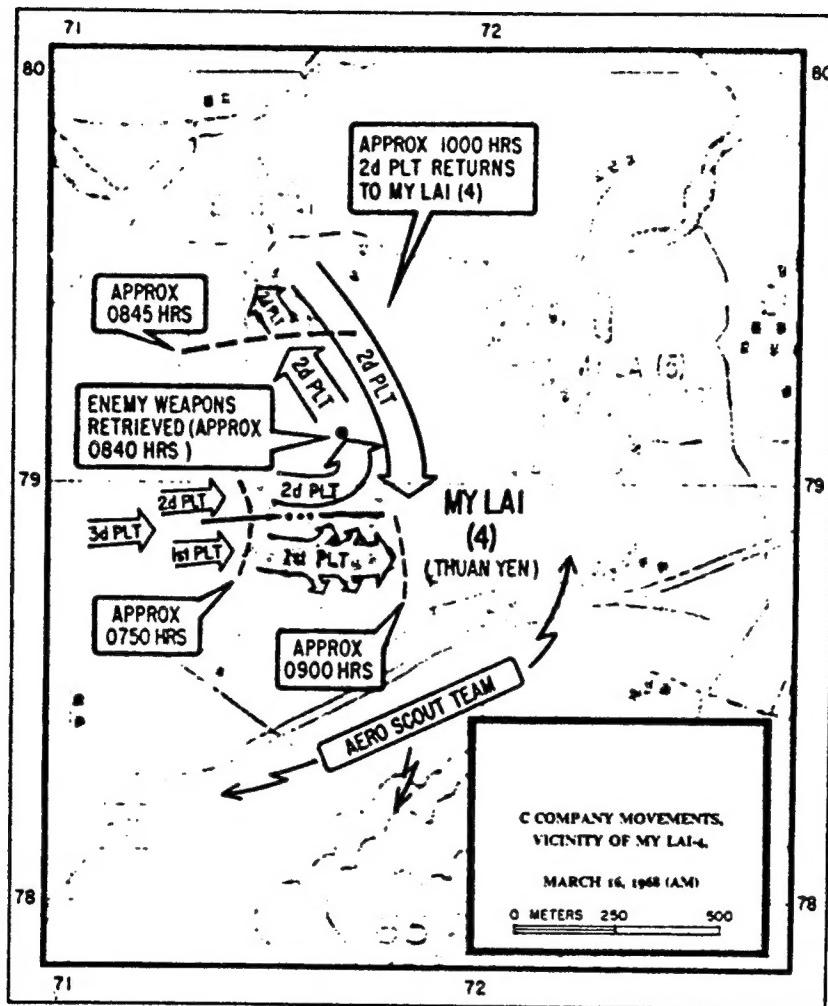
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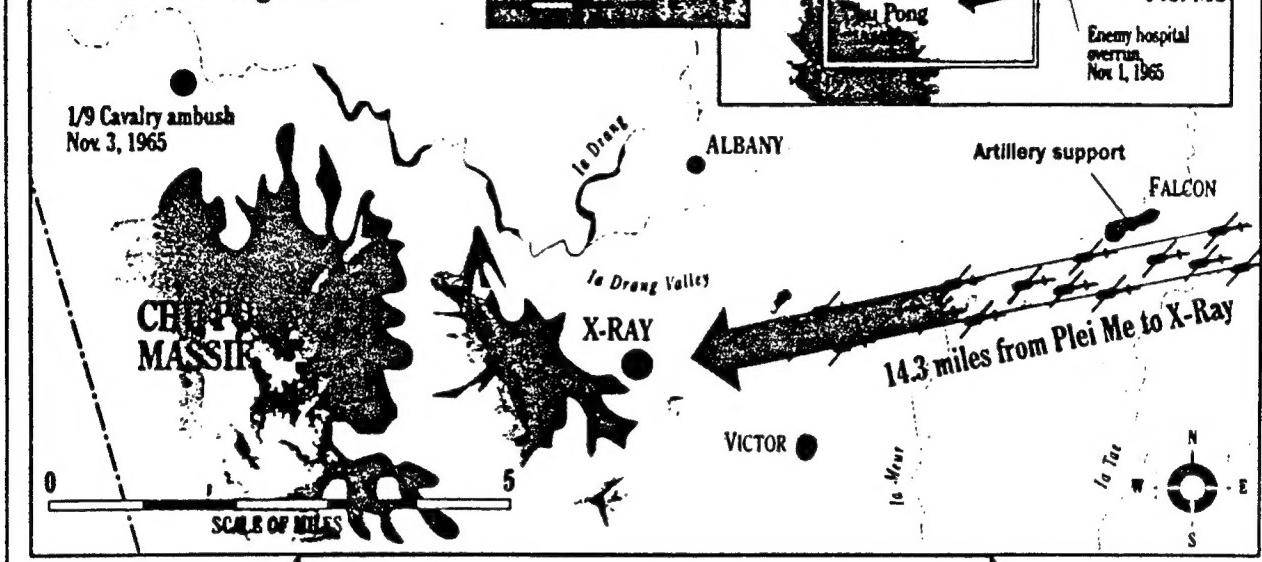
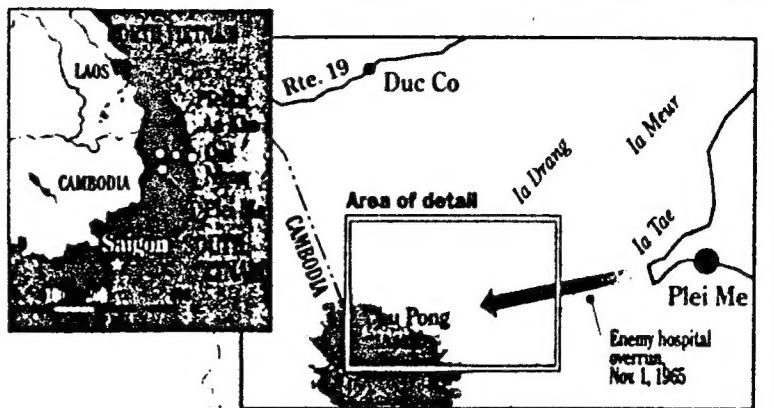
CHARLIE COMPANY MOVEMENTS 16 MARCH 1968



MAPS OF LZ X-RAY

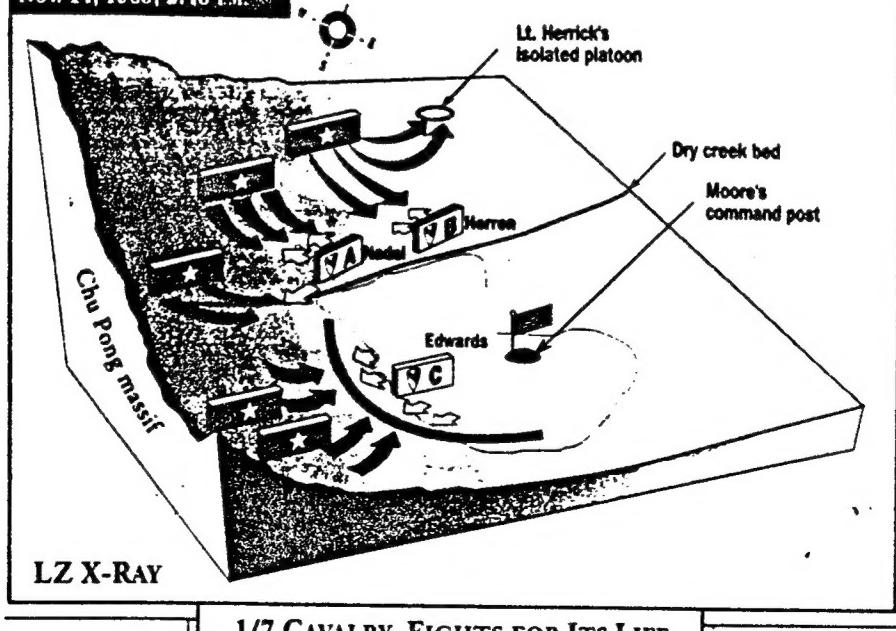
Nov. 14, 1965; 10:48 A.M.

Death valley Remote and inaccessible by road, the Ia Drang Valley had long been a Communist sanctuary and infiltration route into South Vietnam's Central Highlands. Only a few clearings dotted the tangle of scrub brush, ravines, and huge, sun-baked termite hills below the Chu Pong massif.



ASSAULT LANDING AT LZ X-RAY

Nov. 14, 1965; 2:45 PM.



1/7 CAVALRY FIGHTS FOR ITS LIFE

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